
Recent Educational Research on Developing Countries by German Researchers: a survey of the literature

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Educationists in the Federal Republic of Germany have been concerned with problems of education in the Third World for about 20 years; over the period, not only has the intensity of this research changed, but also the relationship between perceived problems and the research itself. This contribution aims to show how recent trends in German educational research have applied to developing countries, and to give an idea of future development through a survey of the literature published since 1980. Some brief remarks should first be made about developments over the last two decades.

The Process of German Educational Research on the Third World until 1980

A first extensive stocktaking of the development of German research in this field was done in about 1980. Especially the papers published in Mitter and Hanf [1980], and in Goldschmidt and Melber [1981] give a deep insight into the activities and central perspectives within German educational research on developing countries. While the contributions in Goldschmidt and Melber cover a wide range of topics (reflections about education and development, the role of schools in Third World countries, curriculum development, basic education, informal education, higher education, mass media, teacher training, teaching methods and the problems of examination and qualification systems), the papers in Mitter and Hanf focus on educational policy and educational reform in the Third World. In both publications one article deals with educational research on the Third World in the Federal Republic of Germany from its beginnings.

Goldschmidt and — even more extensively — Fremerey [1980] outline the development of German research on the interaction between formal education and its socio-economic and political environment in Third World countries. This was characterised at the beginning by an optimism stemming from modernisation theory, which came originally from America. More and more, however, this optimistic belief in the

importance of formal education changed to scepticism, which was increasingly backed up by empirical studies. In the middle seventies, the fundamental criticism was expressed by the question of whether or not education was an obstacle to development. The structure and content of formal education in Third World countries were criticised, and new approaches to reform were discussed. But most of the German educationists, who explored the range of these partial concepts came to the conclusion that in general reforms can be implemented only in as far as the interests of influential groups are not affected. Though radical reform of education systems of Third World countries was (and still is) widely considered as necessary, there were (and are) no substantial changes in most countries. Therefore German researchers became interested in those few countries where changes in the educational system were revolutionary because they were part of an overall development strategy (for example, in the People's Republic of China, in Cuba, Tanzania and Peru) and — stimulated by the arguments of dependence theories — they tried to clarify the correlations between education and the social, economic, and political conditions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

With the failure of adequate educational reforms in mind, some educationists began to analyse the different forms of non-formal adult education, where local cooperation is necessary and local needs can be met — although others warned of the possible negative effects of governmental influence or of stigmatisation of certain population groups caused by offering special adult education programmes as compensation.

So far, the development of German educational research on the Third World may be characterised by an ongoing rejection of unrealistic concepts; nevertheless, a few components could be assembled for the construction of adequate models. To quote Fremerey: 'It has been a 20-year quest for interrelationships, explanations and perspectives. The more consistent it

was, the more severe contradictions were discovered between emancipatory educational goals and the impact of socio-economic and political realities and priorities'.

German Research on Educational Problems in the Third World 1980-83

In educational concern with Third World countries, one can recognise three different types of research:

- on the implementation of projects;
- on the evaluation of measures, carried out as part of educational assistance and on education programmes and their assessment;
- on education systems and the correlations between education and development.

In his article, Danckwört [1981] describes the organisation and the achievements of German education aid and its foci. There are six fields in which German agencies are active:

- non-formal education (ie mainly youth and adult education programmes)
- formal education (ie primary — and secondary — schools, teacher training and in service training
- vocational education
- higher education
- educational planning and administration
- mass media in education

As the most important ones at the end of the seventies, he identifies the fields of vocational education and of higher education, where most of the projects are conducted by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). This assessment is confirmed by all the other studies mentioned above.

As Gross and Zwick [1981] point out, vocational education has been held to be a central element of economic and social development, since projects of German education aid were first implemented. In their study for the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation (BMZ), the authors give a systematic survey of the promotion measures used in the field of vocational education aid. By analysing these, they found that:

- in the sector of industrial occupations promotion, training becomes more and more functional, occupation- and product-oriented, while there is an increasing separation of vocational education from the formal education system and more short term training;
- the promotion of vocational schools does not call forth economic development;

- some developing countries have evolved a combination of education, training and productive work.

As far as vocational training for the primary economic sector is concerned, Gross and Zwick come to the view that, if any project of vocational training is to be implemented:

- the technology has to be appropriate;
- mechanisation should be continuous;
- 'multipliers' should preferably be trained; and
- training and advice should have a complementary function.

As vocational education is very expensive, the authors finally emphasise the necessity to test the chances, risks and effects of every particular kind of measure. Only in this way, they argue, can failures be avoided.

It is just the same problem — the failure of educational aid projects — that Weiland's [1980] article deals with; he tries, however, to find another way to overcome it. For Weiland, the failure of many projects can be seen as caused by their lack of educational and social components. In most cases, only public officials and local elites profit by such projects; so here should be the starting point for reform.

Although the demand to strengthen the coordination and integration of economic projects on the one hand and of educational projects on the other is not new, these purposes have not been realised satisfactorily. Weiland makes the point that integrated educational activities do not only serve economic success but also provide an incentive for further educational reform.

In his study on 'transfer of education and system change' Laaser [1981] offers an extensive survey of the development of the transfer of education, which has been increasingly institutionalised since the sixties, and of research in the field of the sociology of the Third World which is concerned with development and education.

Küper's [1982] report on 'education and science in the field of technical cooperation with developing countries' documents 189 projects which were (and partly still are) being carried out; it also contains a brief analysis of the present situation in the field of education in the developing countries and of German educational assistance. Here, the author names three focal points in the work of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation, which are:

- i) integrated education for rural and urban population groups (ie curriculum development; development, production, and distribution of

adapted training materials: teacher education and inservice training; applied educational research for providing a basis for reforms):

- ii) institutional university promotion in science;
- iii) promotion of school and public sports.

Although Küper considers the international discussion about the relationship between education and development, and its results — he gives a list of targets which the GTZ has set for its work — these considerations seem not (or merely partly) to be applied in the everyday work of German educational assistance. The projects are grouped as follows (all figures from 1982):

- i) in the field of higher education, 113 projects were planned or carried out;
- ii) in the field of primary and secondary education, 51 projects were planned or carried out; and
- iii) in the field of scientific research and consulting, 25 projects were planned or carried out.

This leads back to Laaser's [1981a] question — whether German educational assistance is in crisis or not. There has been a good deal of large scale research, and large scale discussions, through which certain ideas about the relationships between education and development have been proved to be unrealistic. Yet the results of these debates on educational reform have hardly been reflected in the concrete practice of educational assistance and in educational transfer up to now.

There is also work in the field of education systems and the correlations between education and development. Schlegel [1980] in his study of educational reform and the polytechnic vocational school in Peru, aims to contribute to the central issue in educational planning and educational economy, which is expressed by the question, does education promote development or, on the contrary, does it reinforce underdevelopment?

Another study which is concerned with the structures of the education system in the context of neo-colonial dependence is Arora's [1981] critical investigation of the present situation in India, which he describes as socio-economically, politically, and culturally dependent on the western industrialised metropolises.

In their study, Adick, Grosse-Oetringhaus and Nestvogel [1982] are concerned with the origins and the history of education problems in Africa: for eight African countries, the authors trace the connections between social structures and aspects of the education system, subdivided into several fields (pre-colonial

education, educational approaches as instruments of colonialism, education as an instrument of imperialism, meaning and function of education in the process of decolonisation, developments in the education systems of African states).

Nestvogel [1983] is also engaged in the investigation of patterns of learning that were (and partly still are) a part of sub-Saharan African cultures, and which she calls 'traditional' or 'indigenous'. These indigenous patterns of education have mostly been superseded by missionary education and colonial educational systems: that has happened, however, not because they were worthless, but because they were not strong enough to resist.

Hinzen [1983] considers the relationship between literacy and development, with his own experiences in mind, a consideration which raises many questions for future research. Finally, Melber [1981] offers in his article an assessment of reforms in African education systems and some perspectives on the possibilities and limitations of such reforms.

I hope these few examples have offered some impression of theory-oriented research on education systems and the links between education and development in Germany since 1980. In summary, there has been a kind of 'development push' which is marked by the two publications mentioned at the beginning (it may be noted that one of them, Goldschmidt and Melber, contains summaries of all the main contributions in English). What has been done since, can be seen as a refinement, filling in and backing up the theoretical outline put forward there.

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